Joyce and Donald Rumsfeld and their three children: Donald Nicholas, 7; Marcy Kay, 14, and Valerie Jeanne, 18, at Vail, Colo., where Rumsfeld worked preparing President Ford's agenda while his family vacationed.

Don Rumsfeld— He's President Ford's Number One

The Nixon-Haldeman team brought the imperious Presidency to the White House. What sort of Presidency will the Ford-Rumsfeld team provide?

by Lloyd Shearer

WASHINGTON, D.C.

If accessibility to the President equals power—a political equation long held valid here—then the most powerful man in the Ford Administration, after the President, is Donald Rumsfeld.

At 42, Rumsfeld, a lean, ex-Princeton wrestling champion and Navy flier—5 foot 9; 160 pounds; blue eyes with a brownish tint, and brown hair—is Gerald Ford's White House chief of staff. This is a title Rumsfeld doesn't particularly cotton to since it conjures up memories of the Nixon Administration's Bob Haldeman with his Prussian crew cut, his fanatical partisanship, his storm trooper air of arrogance, and his tragic history of arranging the White House tapings.

Rumsfeld prefers his own job description: "My official title on the certificate is Assistant to the President—period," he declares. "My responsibilities are really threefold. Along with Jack Marsh, Bob Hartmann and Phil Buchen, I am one of the Cabinet-rank advisers to the President, and I can discuss a variety of things with him as all of those individuals do.

Other duties

"Another part of my job," he explains, "puts me in charge of the White House Office of Operations. Certain administrative pieces of this building fall under my direct jurisdiction.

"It's true that I choose who eats in the White House mess and who gets picked up by White House car, and it's true I'm in charge of the President's schedule. But I am basically a coordinator, an administrator, an organizer, not an empire-builder. One of my objectives is to expose the President to an ever-widening spectrum of opinion and not a contracting one."

Since power clashes are almost inevitable in the White House, where one man's increased accessibility to the President frequently means another man's decline, it's been suggested that Rumsfeld is replacing Bob Hartmann as Gerald Ford's long-time "Numero Uno," —a suggestion that ruffles the usually unruffled Rumsfeld.

"I never knew Bob Hartmann well," he confesses. "I knew him slightly in the House when he was working for the President [Ford] and I was in Congress [as a four-term Representative, 1962-69, from Illinois' Silk Stocking 13th District, north of Chicago]. Yet I read all this stuff in the press about a big confrontation coming between us.

"First the press reported there was a confrontation. Then they said it was coming. Now they're just rippling around it. The fact of the matter is that Bob's a member of the senior staff here. He works with the President in several capacities. Specifically he's responsible for speechwriting and political affairs, and his advice to the President is valuable.

'Not social friends'

"No matter what you've heard, I certainly work easily with him although we're not social friends. But I've only been back — [from Belgium where Rumsfeld was U.S. Ambassador to NATO]—a couple of months, and I've hardly seen anyone socially."

A superficial review of Rumsfeld's daily schedule seems to obviate his socializing except in the line of duty.

"The White House car," he reports, "it's not a limousine, usually comes for me at 6:40, and I get here about 6:50 in the morning. I read and dictate until 7:45, then meet with my deputy, Dick Cheney, and prepare for the morning staff meeting in the Roosevelt Room. That meeting [which Rumsfeld presides over] is generally finished by 8:30 at which time I meet with the President —between 8:30 and 9.

"We go over the day's schedule, and at 9 I'm generally back in my office where I meet with Ron Nessen [Ford's press secretary], then confer with the President again at 10 or 10:15 along with Ron, Jack Marsh and Bob Hartmann."

After countless duties through the day, Rumsfeld meets with the President for a third time at 5 or 5:30 in the afternoon. He and Ford discuss the day's developments. "Then I come back to my office," Rumsfeld narrates, "and take action on those things that the President decided upon.

Home at 11

"Generally I've been getting home about 11 p.m. I don't think putting in an 18-hour day is either healthy or wise. I'd like to trim off a few hours. But that's the way it's been going.

"Tonight's a big one. I promised my wife I'd attend the hockey game that my 7-year-old, Nicholas, is playing in. My wife makes sure that at least once a day I call and talk to Nicholas on the phone, because he's the only one who's asleep when I get home and he's asleep in the morning when I leave."

(The Rumsfelds, married for 20 years, have three children, Valerie Jeanne, 18, who attends Connecticut College; Marcy Kay, 14, who goes to Western Junior High, and Donald Nicholas, 7.)

Why does Don Rumsfeld work so long and hard? Does he plan, as many

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